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AUTHOR Robbins, William A.
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ABSTRACT

The issues, problems, and changing needs of occupational guidance provided the focus for a special colloquium held at the State University of New York at Albany. The colloquium was conducted by the Two-Year College Student Development Center. For over two days the sixteen participants dealt with the issues and the implications for action suggested by these occupational guidance issues. The participants consisted of practitioners from the elementary and secondary schools, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services, New York State two-year colleges, counselor educators and other specialists. The group's goal was to review specific issues and problems facing occupational guidance and to identify steps which should be taken as a result of these. The need for colloquium is explained and a description of the basic issues and nature of discussions is presented. The main body of the report consists of a discussion of nine major concerns and their consequent recommendations. (Author/BW)

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A REPORT OF THE COLLOQUIUM ON

OCCUPATIONAL COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE

JANUARY 27 - 28, 1972

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Two-Year College Student Development Center
State University of New York at Albany
William A. Robbins, Director

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INTRODUCTION

The issues, problems, and changing needs of occupational guidance provided the focus for a special colloquium held on January 27-28, 1972, at the State University of New York at Albany. The colloquium was conducted by the Two-Year College Student Development Center. Support for the colloquium was provided by a grant under the Vocational Education Act Amendments of 1968, with the help of the Bureau of Two-Year College Programs, New York State Education Department.

For over two days sixteen participants grappled with the issues and the implications for action suggested by these occupational guidance issues. The sixteen consisted of practitioners from the elementary and secondary schools, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services, New York State two-year colleges, the New York State Education Department, university counselor educators, the New York and National Advisory Councils on Vocational Education, and key specialists particularly knowledgeable on the problems of the field. William A. Robbins, Director of the Center, expressed regret that the group, through broadly representative, did not include business, industry and student participants. He charged group members to think as do members of those missing groups. At the last minute several invited leaders, who would have diversified the group even more than it was, were forced to withdraw because of unexpected problems.

The charge to the group was kept deliberately broad. It was to review specific issues and problems facing occupational guidance and to identify steps which should be taken as a result of these, primarily by such a government instrument as the New York State Advisory Council on Vocational Education. The colloquium itself was chaired by Dr. Dorothy Knoell.

NEED FOR COLLOQUIUM

The need for the colloquium arose from the many occupational education changes now occurring, and the importance of strengthening the role that guidance and counseling can have in helping people with their career problems. More particularly, the registering of "Concerns" by the State Advisory Council on Vocational Education indicated a mandate for response.

The first three of these "Concerns" represent continuing problems. Concern I pointed to a lack of adequate information on the part of many persons of the value of vocational education, and urged "that educators at all levels throughout the state initiate and sustain dialogue." It further called upon state secondary schools and colleges to join in a coordinated campaign to inform the public of opportunities in occupational education which are open to students at all levels. Concern II criticized school programs which identify occupational education programs only for "non-academic" students and called for fresh approaches involving close teacher-counselor cooperation. Concern III criticized guidance programs geared mainly toward college-bound students and recommended changes in the programs of guidance and counseling for all students to better help them meet their occupational needs. The Center decided upon sponsoring the Colloquium on Occupational Guidance as one means to respond to the "Concerns" of the Advisory Council.

BASIC ISSUES

A basic issue, essentially a philosophical one, arose almost at once. This issue was concerned with the directions of our responsibility,--'Do we fit people to the needs of society, or equip them for more realistic choices of their own?' Out of this part of the discussion arose high concern over ways occupational education, not as an end but a means to the development of the student, can connect to personal growth. "For many, vocational education has been the tool of narrowing and limiting a person rather than freeing and expanding a person. We must begin to move aside the question of whether the development of the worker or the person comes first. They are one and the same. They develop simultaneously and in tandem." (Participant statement)

Despite the capabilities of the group, or perhaps because of the fuzziness of the rules, the members became confused at times over the many potentially-relevant issues--of vocational vs career education, of total guidance services vs occupational guidance, of the place of community resources vs the school resources, and the roles and objectives of the different levels of education from childhood through adult and continuing education.

NATURE OF DISCUSSIONS

Two predominant themes prevailed throughout the discussions. The importance and excitement of the thrust of career education stimulated many ideas. At the same time participants wanted this new thrust to have strong support, to assure it would not collapse and end up "little different from what we've been doing to date." (Participant statement) A second theme was the humanistic one which stated that the student, whatever his or her age, must be seen as a person with self-concept, life-goal motivational problems all tied directly to personal growth-related considerations, and which stated further that this theme should affect everything recommended by the Colloquium.

Often the wide-ranging discussions dealt with harsh realities. Heavy unemployment of minority groups, with doors being closed to minority groups even as much talk is being given to increasing options were among the many topics discussed. Several voiced criticisms that counseling has not been working well, has not been helping those most in need of help. Participants concluded that other counseling roles must be found--maybe out of the school system altogether, maybe working with students primarily through other professionals on the curriculum and teaching team, or maybe with others in much closer contact with students.

The following report consists of a statement of concerns and specific recommendations with pertinent participant observations. Although the short time the group was in session prevented the development of any careful findings or attempts at consensus, still the following statement represents what the group felt to be their best professional judgments.

CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Concern: That the important new thrust of "career education" may not be able to carry out its significant goals, and in not doing so, become really "nothing more than "vocational education" under a new banner, with the same drawbacks and limitations, with a system for sorting out the non-college-bound for a kind of terminal training that would be, in fact, a dumping ground for the poor and the minorities.

A related concern is that the occupational guidance portion of career education might turn into a national program guilty of two unsatisfactory priorities:

1. A guidance program to match student and job based primarily on efficiency;

2. The meeting of national manpower needs with minimum concerns for the individual.

Recommendations: That the purposes of occupational guidance be clearly recognized or defined as

1. opening doors for individual students to the end that they may have a wide range of alternatives to choose among, in terms of choices of job and career, education and training, even life styles; (remembering careers may change many times in a lifetime);

2. providing skills, attitudes, and knowledges to enable the individual to gain increasing independence in making future choices and in knowing what will be required of him if he is to achieve his goals.

3. Also that the Advisory Council review its statements to see if they are compatible with these purposes; that it further push for a clearly-defined statement of career education which will be promoted across all educational levels of the state.

Participant statements:

"The centrality of vocational education to the healthy growth and development of all of us is educationally sound, psychologically correct and individually needed. The gap between this need and the current delivery system of vocational education to students is wide, however."

"Career guidance's commitment (related to that of career education) should be first and foremost to help individuals to develop and realize their career goals, and all stages of program planning and operation has to be geared to the needs of individuals."

"There is a need for a continuing examination of the role of guidance and counseling by an advisory group meeting several times a year and making specific recommendations for making counseling more effective."

"Career Education is that aspect of an educational experience anywhere which helps a person discover and define his talent or his talents which may be applied toward a career. Vocational education, on the other hand, is that aspect of an educational experience which helps a person refine his talents and to develop them and to develop the skills necessary to enter into a career."

II. Concern: That there is a variety of roles to be played on the team which will accomplish the purposes expressed above; these necessitate a variety of preparatory programs; i.e. generalists in counseling and guidance all prepared to the same professional level in the same preparation program will not be able to do the total job. Furthermore, employment opportunities must be available to those trained for these various roles.

Recommendations: That

1. the various counselor roles relating to career education be carefully defined so as to enable colleges and universities to develop pre- and in-service programs;

2. these roles utilize not only fully-prepared generalist counselors but also paraprofessionals who can serve as facilitators, change agents, recruiters and job developers, peer counselors and people outside the school staff itself who can play an important role in occupational guidance, all of whom need appropriate training to be effective as team members;

3. employment opportunities be developed for personnel trained at these several levels;

4. the Advisory Council undertake to find out what barriers (certification, placement, finances) may exist interfering with the appropriate utilization of such personnel;

5. the activities of the counseling team be linked closely with those activities of the instructional program.

Participant statements:

"Although there may be occasional exceptions, general school counselors should not be expected to provide a full program of career guidance. Instead schools and colleges should employ, full-time if possible, part-time or on a contract basis if not possible, necessary specialists such as occupational information specialists, vocational counselors, and college information specialists. The general counselor should coordinate the special services and serve as liaison between these specialists, school staff, community, and others."

"Different kinds of people should be able to move into the ranks of counselors. One of the ways to begin is training new professionals--persons without the traditional educational preparation, exploring different definitions of 'professional,' and alternative approaches to becoming that professional."

"The traditional school counselor is ill-prepared to guide young people in the vocational area. We badly need a massive effort, such as the NDEA Act, to retrain existing guidance counselors. Short of that, the local school districts could articulate their priorities in terms of vocational education and establish expectations not only for guidance counselors but for classroom teachers as well."

"While guidance counselors may play an important part in facilitating career decision making, the process is much too important to be left to one person having limited contact with the student."

"Counselors have to make an increased effort to concern themselves with becoming an integral part of the entire vocational educational program."

III. Concern: That emphasis is placed on the specialized needs of career guidance in vocational education, while developing new types of roles and programs of preparation to fill these roles. Specifically, we need better prepared personnel to recruit, provide information about careers and career training, develop jobs, and place students.

Recommendations: That

1. colleges and universities be encouraged to "beef up" that part of their counselor--preparation program concerned with career guidance and

2. students be recruited to these programs who have a genuine concern for and interest in undertaking occupational guidance as a major responsibility;

3. priority be assigned in in-service education workshops that will improve the career-education skills and knowledge of counselors already working in the schools.

Participant Statements:

"Few schools--and I am thinking mainly of the public schools rather than counseling agencies or colleges--have anything like a good occupational information library, few make use of materials in film, audiotape and other media, and few make use of even the older group guidance methods of helping boys and girls plan their vocational and occupational future, let alone using the newer videotape, games and various kinds of simulation methods and materials."

"Counselor educators should be revising the content of their counselor training programs to include much more on humanistic education, very much more on occupational guidance and information, and on the content and approach needed for new types of counselor-guidance persons (e.g. highly skilled but non-traditionally prepared personnel).

IV. Concern: That the person is always more important than the job in the scheme of career education, and that the humanistic approach should permeate programs to prepare counselor educators at all levels.

Recommendations: That

1. a humanistic approach be in a sense the general education component of all preparation programs for counseling and guidance personnel, and

2. in-service training opportunities with this humanistic focus be developed and encouraged for

   a. teachers, particularly at the elementary level, and
   b. counseling and guidance personnel prepared in programs lacking this theme.

Participant statements:

"It is essential for the student as a person to have a sense of occupation, and it's getting harder in our society. We also need to connect occupational education to personal growth. The individual's personal growth--that's the important thing!"

"We ought to be sure that the counseling function is creating the support networks in schools to allow the hooking of occupational education concerns to the personal concerns of students."

"Your're concerned about the satisfaction that people feel from being reasonably happy and comfortable in what they do to make a living. And in order to do that you have to get into humanistic development and you have to place the job in the proper perspective. Really the goal of vocational development is the good life, rather than the good job."

"Now is a moment of truth. In marriage of humanistic and vocational education, there is greater receptivity today and a willingness to deal with humanistic studies in the vocational establishment than you'll find in the 'mainline generalist'."

"To wit, look around where the curriculum in humanistic studies are finding their places in the community college. In occupational programs. Who's coming into humanistic centers? Vocational teachers and occupational counselors. There is a great readiness here and an openess here, and probably because vocational educators have had to perform this way to survive."

V. Concern: That the importance of early childhood education has been undervalued in forming attitudes and styles of lifetime learning, and is inflicting long-term damage to the ability of young students to profit from formal education.

Recommendations: That

1. elementary school guidance personnel be prepared and employed who can do much to prevent the 'hurt' which large numbers of elementary school students now experience, leading to more serious learning disabilities in later years;

2. guidance personnel in elementary school work closely with and through instructional staff to broaden the experience of youngsters with respect to occupational education;

3. these guidance personnel serve as a kind of conscience for career education in the school situation, by registering concern as to whether materials used represent career education adequately, and whether out-of-class learning experiences are structured so as to develop positive attitudes toward and information about the world of work; and

4. an appropriate group in the American Personnel and Guidance Association be asked to review textbooks and other instructional materials with respect to the adequacy and appropriateness of their treatment of concepts relating to career education and the roles of women and minorities in our society.

Participant statements:

"The job of the elementary school is to identify and develop the child's learning style and ability, perform diagnosis and prescriptive services, and assign whatever devices are needed to make learning real to the child. But almost nobody in the elementary school is doing this!"

"Counselors are the people in the schools who should ride herd on materials, who can be sensitive to career development possibilities in the school's teaching."

"It would be a real help if an APGA national committee that evaluated occupational information could modify its approach. Let's say to them, 'As you rate these tthings each month, add these factors to yourcriteria and to your rating scale.'"

VI. Concern: That the career education does not end with high school or college graduation, but, instead, is a lifetime development process in keeping with the individual's need to be able to cope with life crises at different points, and to develop independence and self-understanding. Such a lifetime development process takes on growing importance with the shortened work week, early retirement, increased mobility, and expected occupational changes during the individual's career span.

Recommendations: That

1. the Advisory Council direct special attention to the needs of out-of-school youth and adults for career guidance and education, including such matters as support for such services, auspices, special personnel, etc,, and

2. schools, colleges, and universities concern themselves with keeping doors open for individuals who have made initial and/or tentative career decisions, and

3. that such schools develop programs to help older people with the resource of leisure time find ways to make use of many talents older people have which our society badly needs to utilize but now ignores. As one illustration of this, that we recruit and train such older people for personal involvement in a societally-productive activity, such as a day care center.

Participant statements:

"Guidance and career development must begin at the elementary level, be developmental in approach, and not a function just at a point of crisis."

"Many of our programs for adults around the state are not geared to career development. They're too specific, technical kinds of things."

"Adults should represent for us a major priority in career education--with a new emphasis and new programs deserving special support from grant funds."

VII. Concern: That the special needs and problems of underrepresented minority groups in career guidance education and placement might tend to be overlooked as career education conquers its problems of image and attraction.

Recommendations: That

1. the Advisory Council concern itself that the problems of minorities in recruitment, persistence and placement continue to be spotlighted until such time as minorities enroll, persist and are placed in proportion to their numbers in the overall school population, and

2. special efforts be made to recruit, prepare and place not only just minority group counselors, but also instructors in career programs who are minority group members.

Participant statements:

"Another problem of minorities, especially Puerto Ricans with language problems, is that they are now "tracked" into vocational schools without any concern for the appropriateness of the placement."

"We've been saying options are open, but minorities are saying, 'Show us!'"

"But black students aren't in many of the programs. Also there needs to be black teacher models and they are just not there."

VIII. Concern: That the school and colleges cannot do the full job of career education alone, without increased community involvement, the help of existing agencies and specially contracted ones, and that multiple avenues be welcomed, so long as unnecessary duplication of services can be avoided.

Recommendations: That

1. non-credentialed personnel from the community be employed by school districts under contract to perform selected career education functions on a short term basis which school personnel are less well prepared to perform, and

2. community resources be employed by the school district to the fullest in career education and retooled as necessary in broadening opportunities for students to have work experience, guidance, job placement and the like, and

3. resources such as the computer-based national vocational data bank be linked to local access terminals in libraries, made available through home television sets, etc., in order to help people get at the information they need to make appropriate career decisions.

4. those responsible from government, community and school offices encourage counselors, as well as other personnel in community and school agencies, to work out articulation problems cooperatively in the best interest of students.

Participant statements:

"Because career education covers all ages, responsibility for implementing the program might more appropriately rest in the community than in the schools where age limits and current stereotypes limit the flexibility of the guidance role (Youth Opportunity Centers, CAP, MDTL, etc.)"

"Can't we use existing institutions to provide each individual with as much information as possible as often as possible, so that he can use this to make his own decision?"

"Is it right to create another agency outside the school? Yet who goes into pool parlors, numbers places, prisons? How many men 45 years old who need career education help are getting it?"

"Take a good hard look at some of the gaps between BOCES programs and the two-year community college. It's a bad scene!"

IX. Concern: That career education will not emerge from the limitation suffered by vocational education unless there is attitude change of those in the higher education community, and personnel in this area become involved in the conceptualization and development of career education. Such personnel would include those in teacher and counselor preparation, presidents and instructional administration, and faculty in liberal arts programs. It is not enough to sell to parents and the general public, for college and university personnel are also powerful opinion-makers and influencers.

Recommendation: That

1. the Advisory Council seek to involve higher education personnel in its activities to an increasing extent, in order to help them become more cognizant of the major difference that career education represents, and to help in the process of change.

Participant statements:

"It is critical that we convince college and university people that career education is new and exciting and something different than we've been doing to date. Otherwise we're not going to win."

"Until we change the attitudes of those dealing with and affecting all areas of career education, we'll just have a change in terms and not in something substantial."

TWO-YEAR COLLEGE STUDENT DEVELOPMENT CENTER
State University of New York at Albany

DIRECTORY OF PARTICIPANTS

COLLOQUIUM ON OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

January 27 and 28, 1972

John C. Briscoe	Secretary, State Advisory Council on Vocational Education State Education Department, Albany, New York A.A. Contra Costa College A.B. and M.A. San Francisco State College Doctoral work at University of California at Berkeley Co-Author "The Richmond Plan"; Chairman, Joint National Advisory Council--State Advisory Council
Patrick J. Dempsey	Director of Guidance, Syracuse City School District B.S. Western Michigan University M.A. University of Michigan Graduate Study, Syracuse University Director of occupational and vocational guidance programs for Syracuse business and industry
Marvin J. Feldman	President, Fashion Institute of Technology, New York A.B. San Francisco State College Ford Foundation, Program Officer in Division of International Education and Research; National Advisory Council on Occupational Education; Former Chairman and Executive Director of the Planning and Review Committee at United States Office of Economic Opportunity
Leo Goldman	Professor of Education, City University of New York B.S. City University of New York M.A. Teacher's College, Columbia University Ph.D. Columbia University Editor of PERSONNEL AND GUIDANCE JOURNAL and Coordinator Counselor Education Program, CUNY

Lawrence E. Gray

Chief, Bureau of Two-Year College Programs, State Education Department

A.A.S. Broome Community College
B.S. and M.S. SUNY-Albany
Doctoral work at SUNY-Albany

Formerly Chairman, Chemistry Department, Onondaga Community College; and employed with Allied Chemical Company, IBM and Anoline and Film Corporation

G. Earl Hay

Supervisor of Vocational Curriculum, Bureau of Secondary Curriculum Development, State Education Department

B.S. and M.S. State University College at Oswego
Graduate work in Educational Administration, Syracuse University

Consultant on Vocational Curriculum with United States Office of Education; former classroom teacher and administrator

Arthur A. Hitchcock

Professor of Education and Department Chairman, Guidance and Personnel Services, SUNY-Albany

A.B. Wesleyan University
Ed.M. Harvard University
Ph.D. Yale University

Formerly Executive Director, American Personnel and Guidance Association; Director, Two-Year College Student Development Center

Laura J. Houston

Vice President, College for Human Services, New York

B.A. Smith College
M.S.W. School of Social Work. Columbia University

Member, New York State Advisory Council on Vocational Education; Nominated in 1970 for Young Women of America Award.

Dorothy M. Knoell

Special Assistant for Development and Evaluation
Office of the Chancellor, California Community Colleges

A.B. Douglass College (Rutgers University)
M.A. University of Connecticut
Ph.D. University of Chicago

Formerly Director of Urban Community College Project (Ford Foundation and American Association of Junior Colleges); Director of Field Study Research Project which led to the New York Urban Centers

Walter M. Lifton	Professor of Education and Director of School Guidance and Counseling Program, Guidance and Personnel Department, SUNY-Albany A.B. Brooklyn College M.A. and Ph.D. New York University Formerly consultant at White House Conference on Children and Youth, Coordinator of Pupil Personnel Services, Rochester, New York
Sterling L. Pierce	Associate in Education, Bureau of Guidance, Division of Pupil Personnel Services, State Education Department B.A. and M.S. Syracuse University Doctoral work, SUNY-Albany Former counselor, Fredonia and East Greenbush Central Schools
William A. Robbins	Director, Two-Year College Student Development Center B.A. Drew University M.D. Union Theological Seminary M.A. Teachers College, Columbia University Doctoral Work, Teachers College, Columbia University Formerly, Dean of Students, Mohawk Valley Community College; Member of the Social Science Department
Francis J. Russo	Supervisor of Occupational Education, BOCES Nassau County B.A. and M.A. New York University Formerly Director of Pupil Personnel Services, Bethpage, New York; Faculty member in Guidance and Personnel Administration, St. Johns University
Harold C. Skorpen	Director, Program in Humanistic Education, SUNY-Albany B.S. Cornell University M.S. Indiana University Ph.D. Purdue University Formerly Associate in Higher Education Guidance, Bureau of Two-Year College Programs, State Education Department

John Van Buren	Associate Professor of Education, Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York A.B. Morehouse College M.A. Atlanta University Ed.D. Boston University Former Guidance Counselor, Bedford, Massachusetts; President, Board of Education, Hempstead, New York
Stanley E. Zimmerman	Director of Guidance, Foreman Area Education Center, Fairport, New York B.S. State University College at Buffalo M.S. Hofstra University Formerly Industrial Arts Teacher at Elwood Public School District, Long Island

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